really desired to improve relations. Premature naval discussions might ruin the whole plan of a rapprochement, " The political factor is more elastic 'than the military, , . . Our chief aim must be to reach 2, political agreement,, however unimportant. For the mere fact of a minor understanding combined with some naval pact would greatly simplify our policy as a whole."

Kiderlen's advice to decline a naval agreement unaccompanied by a political understanding was in accord with Btthmann's views, and the Chancellor continued to seek his advice. A report of the first detailed conversation with the British Ambassador on October 14, 1909, was forwarded with a craft agreement to Bucharest* Kiderlen wrote to express his satisfaction with the start, but thought the draft too ambitious for England to accept. The difficulty, he added., would be to avoid the suspicion that Germany wished to separate her from her friends. The letter ended with an appeal not to flinch from a fairly far-reaching naval agreement as soon as a visible *dzi&tte* appeared. So long as the defence of German shores was assured, a few ships more or less should not stand i*i rhe way. The second conversation between Bethmanii and Goschen on November 4 was likewise reported, with a grateful letter from the Chancellor. Kiderlen replied that if the thread was not cutj he believed in success. It would be a great gain if Germany's open, or secret antagonists could no longer count on Anglo-German antagonism. The negotiations for a naval and neutrality agreement were interrupted in November by the General Election in England, resumed early in 1910 and finally dropped in 1912, The attempt of Bethrnann and Kiderlen to mend the wires to London was made in all sincerity, but it came too kte for success. Billow had

gone, but Tirpitz., a much stronger man. remained and he possessed the ear of the Kaiser.

At the age of fifty-eight Kiderlen was still a Minister in a, minor capital, while younger and lesser men became Ambassadors. The situation was too paradoxical to last, particularly after his notable achievements during the winter of 1908-9. He contemplated resignation from the diplomatic service in order to become the German representative on the Commission of the Ottoman Debt. The rumour that his services might be lost to the State filled his friends in Berlin with dismay. The modest Schoen was no obstacle, for he rightly regarded himself as best fitted for an Embassy. " Bethmaan is a soft nature/'